

On December 6, 1606, the journey to Virginia began on three ships: the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, and the Discovery. It is preserved by the National Park Service and Preservation Virginia for visitors to learn about the importance of Jamestown and what was born out of its being the first permanent English settlement in North America. That winter of 1609–10 is known as the "Starving Time." During that winter the English were afraid to leave the fort, due to a legitimate fear of being killed by the Powhatan Indians. As a result they ate anything they could: various animals, leather from their shoes and belts, and sometimes fellow settlers who had already died. By early 1610 most of the settlers, 80–90% according to William Strachey, had died due to starvation and disease. In May 1610, shipwrecked settlers who had been stranded in Bermuda finally arrived at Jamestown. Part of a fleet sent the previous fall, the survivors used two boats built on Bermuda to get to Jamestown. Sir Thomas Gates, the newly named governor, found Jamestown in shambles with the palisades of the fort torn down, gates off their hinges, and food stores running low. The decision was made to abandon the settlement. Less than a day after leaving, however, Gates and those with him, including the survivors of the "Starving Time," were met by news of an incoming fleet. Nathaniel Bacon got about 1,000 settlers to join him and take care of the "Indian Problem." Bacon forced Governor Berkeley to give him an official commission to attack the American Indians to blame. Bacon and his followers, however, did not differentiate between those tribes responsible for the attacks and those who were loyal to the English. Governor Berkeley declared Bacon a rebel and civil war erupted in the colony. In September, Bacon and his followers set fire to Jamestown, destroying 16 to 18 houses, the church and the statehouse. Not long after, in October, the Rebellion began its end with the death of Nathaniel Bacon of the "bloody flux." It is contested whether, at the time, these people were considered indentured servants or enslaved peoples however, historical evidence suggests they were often treated in a manner that more closely resembles enslavement as we understand it today. The settlers were unhappy about their tobacco being sold only to English merchants due to the Navigation Acts, high taxes, and attacks on outlying plantations by American Indians on the frontiers. Despite peace being declared in 1632, English encroachments on Powhatan lands continued undiminished as more settlers arrived in the Colony. The settlers were now protected against any attacks that might occur from the local Powhatan Indians, whose hunting land they were living on. Relations had already been mixed between the newcomers and the Powhatan Indians. In that same year, the first documented Africans were forcibly captured and brought to Virginia to work the tobacco fields. In April 1644, Opechancanough planned another coordinated attack, which resulted in the deaths of another 350–400 of the 8,000 settlers.